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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI - BRUDER AND BERNIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IR](#) [KU](#) [KUWAIT](#) [IRAN](#) [RELATIONS](#)
SUBJECT: SOMETIME STRATEGIC ADVISOR TO GOK SAYS IRAN
"ABSOLUTELY" A THREAT TO KUWAIT

REF: KUWAIT 71

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Dr. Sami Al-Faraj, the director of the Kuwait Center for Strategic Studies (KCSS) and a regularly contracted advisor to various government ministries in Kuwait on national security issues, told Poloff January 8 that the GOK views Iran as a threat. According to Al-Faraj, the Government of Kuwait (GOK) recently began developing contingency plans to deal with three possible threats from Iran: direct military aggression, Iranian-backed low-level violence and/or terrorism, and a targeted propaganda "blitz." The GOK is also "very concerned" about the possibility that an accident at one of Iran's nuclear facilities, specifically Bushehr, could have devastating environmental effects on Kuwait. Al-Faraj stressed the GOK's preference to address its concerns with the Iranians diplomatically; he was optimistic that GCC diplomatic efforts would be more successful than European efforts, since GCC countries' vital interests were at stake and they could offer more "financial incentives." President Ahmadinejad was no more a threat than previous leaders, Al-Faraj said, noting that, "Iran has always been a threat." End summary.

GOK Preparing Contingency Plans for Iranian Threats

12. (C) In a January 8 meeting with liberal academic Dr. Sami Al-Faraj, whom the GOK regularly contracts to advise on national security issues and to prepare "sensitive" reports, Poloff asked if the GOK viewed Iran as a threat. Al-Faraj responded emphatically, "Absolutely." Specifically, Al-Faraj said the GOK had begun preparing plans in the last year to deal with three contingencies: a direct military confrontation, which "Kuwait could not handle"; Iranian-backed low-level violence and/or terrorism in Kuwait, which is a "great concern" for the GOK; and civil unrest sparked by an Iranian propaganda "blitz" focused on Kuwait's "80,000 plus" Iranian expatriates, Shi'a community (approximately 30-35% of the population), and Sunni Islamists who sympathize with Iran's hard line policies towards the U.S. and Israel.

13. (C) A direct military confrontation with Iran was beyond Kuwait's ability to even plan for, Al-Faraj said. The GOK worried that even a substantial movement of Iranian forces within Iran's territorial waters could quickly "saturate" Kuwait's defense networks. On the threat of Iranian-sponsored terrorism in Kuwait, Al-Faraj said he believed Iranian-backed terrorist cells were present in Kuwait. When asked what measures the GOK was taking to counter this threat, Al-Faraj replied vaguely that the GOK was aware of their existence and was "monitoring" them.

GOK "Very Concerned" About Possible Nuclear Accident

¶4. (C) According to Al-Faraj, the GOK is "very concerned" about Iran's nuclear program, particularly "the best worst-case scenario": the possibility of an accident at one of Iran's nuclear facilities, specifically Bushehr, with devastating environmental consequences for the entire Gulf region. Kuwait could not even contemplate the worst possibility arising from the Iranian nuclear program, he said. Al-Faraj told Poloff that the GOK had commissioned several studies on the environmental impacts of a nuclear accident. He also noted that currents in the Gulf flow counter-clockwise and would bring contaminants to Kuwait "before they reached the city of Bushehr." (See reftel for a report on Kuwaiti radiation monitoring plans.)

¶5. (S) Al-Faraj said, and stressed repeatedly, that the GOK preferred to deal with Iran diplomatically and had conveyed its concerns about Iran's nuclear program to the Iranian Government through both front- and back-channel means, including through Iranian "spies." He was very optimistic that GCC diplomatic efforts would be more successful than U.S. and European efforts to dissuade Iran from pursuing a nuclear program since GCC countries vital interests were at stake and they could offer more "financial incentives." He noted, however, that Kuwait was unlikely to directly confront Iran over its nuclear program because it did not want to be seen as a U.S. puppet; although Al-Faraj claimed GCC countries, including Kuwait, use the U.S. military presence in the Gulf to exert pressure on Iran during negotiations.

KCSS Training on "Escalation In Iran's Nuclear Crisis"

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¶6. (C) Al-Faraj shared with Poloff the content of a "strategic exercise on crisis management" from one of KCSS' training courses. The exercise, entitled "Contingency Planning for a Possible Escalation In Iran's Nuclear Crisis," required students to "assess and evaluate" the following scenarios in order to draw lessons for "planning, organizing, and coordinating the national effort to manage the crisis":

- An Unidentified Pollutant or Radiation Emission;
- Terrorist Operations Against and Disruption of the Domestic Front;
- Confronting Conventional and Non-Conventional Attacks;
- Saturation of Emergency Services Due to Tempo of Operations;
- Threatening Strategic Economic Resources;
- Threatening Financial, Commercial Services, and Communications;
- Inability to Control Domestic Situation;
- Tension on the Diplomatic Front with Iran's Allies;
- The Armed Forces Reach a Situation of Attrition.

(Comment: Given that the KCSS' training programs are designed almost exclusively for small classes of GOK political and military officials, this exercise may give some insight into the issues of concern to the GOK. End comment.)

Bio Note

¶7. (C) Dr. Sami Al-Faraj is the director of the Kuwait Center for Strategic Studies, a private, research institute specializing in strategic planning, crisis management, and national security issues in the Gulf. Al-Faraj teaches small classes of GOK political and security officials at his center and writes, what he terms, "sensitive" reports for the GOK. He said he also serves as an advisor to GCC Secretary General Abdul Rahman Al-Attiyah. Al-Faraj, a former military officer, referred to himself as a "Najdi," suggesting his family is originally from the Najd region of Saudi Arabia. Al-Faraj is unmarried and appears to be in his mid-50s. He

speaks excellent English.

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LeBaron